PERSONAL HISTORY
OF
ESTES DESHON CHAMBERS

My grandfather on mother's side of the family was dead when I can first remember. I can remember grandmother when I was about 4 or 5 years old, But I never did meet grand-dad. Grandmother lived close by us and she lived real close to here. In fact this ground was hers. Then it went to my mother and then to me. I can't remember either grandparent on dad's side because my father was the youngest of a large family. I was about 27 when my one grandmother passed away. I was married and had 2 children when she went. Her name was Sarah PETERS. I used to know what her maiden name was.

She was a very very wonderful, fine person. She was a little, short heavy set woman, very kind, and I never did see her mad in my life, and I never seen her speak an angry word to anybody. I think most anybody who knew her would say the same thing. She was just real easy going, never let anything bother her. I wasn't like her.

We used to go there and they had lots of fruit. They raised currants and a lot of little stuff like that that you don't see today growing. I can't remember that she ever told any stories when we visited. They had plums and goose-berries and cherries and grapes. I can't remember too much about their garden. It was more about their fruit.

I didn't make any preference among my aunts and uncles because I liked them all. Father did general farming. He raised corn, wheat, oats and they put up hay and he run a dairy. Corn here was their main crop in his time. He raised his feed that he fed to the cattle but I don't remember if he fed it all to them. Soy beans were not raised here in his time.

For years he rented big farms and farmed heavy, probably 200 to 250 acres. That was heavy because it was all farmed with horses. We lived at one place for quite a number of years near St. Joe then we moved to Clarksdale. I was born at Odessa Missouri but only lived there a couple of years till we went to near St Joe.

At Clarksdale dad bought a big farm out there. I was 15 when we moved there. They lived there I imagine 10 or 12 years. I was married when I was 17 and my husband and I lived close to Clarksdale too.

I remember a lot about the farm near St Joe because I went to school at the same school and when we left I was ready for highschool. Went to only one grade school (Pickett). They used to have only one teacher to teach all the grades for about 4 years and from then on they had two. I think there was only about 30 in each room. Now days they have a teacher for each grade and I really don't know if it is any better. I think they was just as smart of people that graduated in those days as there is today. There was very few problems in the school when all the classes were together. With the behavior of the children today I don't believe it would go over that good.

In my last 4 years I had a man teacher. He was a wonderful teacher. His name was Ernest Burkhead. He was born and raised in a little town about 14 miles from here by the name of Gower. He used to drive his horse and buggy over close to the school and board it and roomed with a family that lived real close to the school. Then on Friday night he'd drive home. But he was a fine teacher and a fine man. He was exceptionally good to me for some reason, I don't know why. He liked to have lots of entertainments. That would consist of a box supper or a pie supper. A pie supper wouldn't be anything only one pie in a box. Then they would have an auctioneer to sell the pie boxes. The money went to the school.

These boxes were closed and trimmed real pretty, oh yes. These young men that took girls to the box supper would see the box and they'd know how it was decorated and they would know when to bid on the one they wanted. I never hear of anyone doing that anymore. I know one time I was going with my husband (to be) to a pie supper at a country school, and he knew which my

box was and there was several of his friends there and they ran the pie up on him. I think it cost him three dollars and a half which would be more like twenty dollars today. But they usually sold for something like twenty-five cents to as high as sixty or seventy or something like that. And that pie was the first pie I ever baked myself. It was lots of fun to put on a pie supper or box supper. And it was very little trouble for whoever was fixing the box. They had pie or cake or just whatever they wanted to put in it. Whoever fixed the box and whoever bought the box, they set down and ate together. Sometimes three or four would eat out of one box.

The closest farm to us (St Joe) they wasn't any children and the next farm they was children. But we didn't visit with them too much because they were gardeners and they were very busy. They kept their children busy. We had chores to do. My father always run a large dairy and he had a little tenant house that he kept a man and a woman in, when we lived over here in this house before we moved to Clarksdale. The man helped him with the farm work and the woman helped him with the milking. And my father's nephew, Guy Landis, lived with us for seven years and he also helped with the milking and so did I. When I was twelve years old I went to milking, knew how to milk real good when I was twelve. I'd milk about eight cows before I went to school.

It takes about ten minutes to milk a cow. We had a good dairy herd, he didn't keep scrubs. A cow gives on the average three gallons on a milking and they are milked twice a day. Dad had about forty head of dairy cows, there was five of us milking. When the men was all busy in the field and I was the oldest in the family, dad kinda made a boy out of me, for about three years I guess I would take the milk up in St. Joe to the dairy. The milk was all loaded on a milk wagon and I would drive the team of horses or mules, didn't make any difference. I guess it was about six miles, quite a little ways for a team. When he left and went to Clarksdale dad

still farmed but he didn't dairy. Dairying was Sunday and all. When I was going to school and had to be there at eight o'clock you know I had to get up pretty early.

The 1918 flu epidemic, that was a bad year. My husband and I lived on a farm close to Clarksdale. No one on my side of the family or his side of the family had it. But we had a friend who lived not very far from us, the young girl was pregnant and she died. And of course that just scared everybody. We was scared to go to the funeral but we did go. We didn't have nothing else when I was growing up, just measles and a few very light things.

Now days they farm on bigger scales. They rent or own more ground. They own and then rent all the ground that they can. Like the man that farms my ground, I imagine that he has maybe a hundred and fifty acres of his own. He has two married sons and they farm seventeen hundred acres. But they've got the huge machinery of all descriptions. All these big things that in stead of taking a row at a time like they did with horses, why they can take twelve or fourteen rows at a time.

The St. Joe farmhouse is still standing but hardly. It was a large brick house. It had a number of bedrooms, a big long kitchen and a long dining room. The dining room was quite a bit larger than the kitchen. Then there was a living room and what they called the parlor. You had a living room that you lived in and when you had company on Sunday, you went in your parlor. I went in there every day because I had music lessons and I had to practice. I think that in our school they was about six or seven that had pianos out of about thirty families. I came out lucky because I could learn music much quicker than I could my school books. In fact they was lots of musicians in my family. My mother and my two sisters were musicians. All played the piano. My mother had two brothers that were doctors and they were musicians and they were the pianists at each one of their

churches. I played the piano regularly up until the time I was married. My husband cared nothing about piano music. He played the violin. So when we were married I didn't even move my piano. But I've had a piano since and kinda picked up. In fact I was giving music lessons when I got married. And when we had all those church suppers and things, I was the one that did the playing and they was a lot of it. None of my children ever took any kind of lessons on an instruments, I don't believe. But a majority of the grand-children are very good musicians and some of the great grand. I think I have about twenty-two grand-children and probably eighteen greatgrand-children.

My parents bought a few books but had no big display. There was a Bible in the home. We went to Sunday-school and church. We had that at our schoolhouse every Sunday afternoon. They was all denominations that went there. They had what they called a superintendant of the Sunday-school and he just made talks.

My mother was lenient, my father was real strict and I wouldn't never a done anything too bad. Dad never whipped me in his life, he never slapped me. Some of the others did get a little now and then. It is usually the youngest, not the oldest that is the favorite, but I think my parents were married about five years before I was born. And when I was born my father was crazy about little kids and so he was always pretty good to me. Even after I was married I was always a little bit favorite, I think.

I was born in 1895 and Elliot was born about two years later, then two years later came Alberta, a sister, and about two years later another sister, Lillian, and that was it. I am eight years older than my youngest sister. I have two sets of twin cousins on my father's side and one set of twin cousins on my mother's side and I have a set of great grand-children that are twins. I had to stop and think if they were grand-children or great grand-children. But no one had triplets.

I think in the city you are thrown together with so many different families and what one won't think of, another one will. And in the country they were never thrown together. They were a family of their own unless company come or something like that.

When I was growing up we had croquet. That was a good game. We would always go to picnics and go where there was entertainments. The school would put on the entertainments. At Christmas if we would get a nice doll and a ring we thought we was doing good. Everybody had to get an orange in their Christmas stocking, that was a big deal. An orange was rare back in those days for some reason.

My best friends when I was a girl were Ruth Hogue and later Blanche Butchart. Her folks run a florist. My father always had a buggy and a horse. And we rode to school in it most of the time because it was about three miles to the school. We left the buggy and the horse there during the day and then we come home in it. I had a horse and I went to St Joe lots of times horseback. It was about three miles to where we would go in the town. I used a side saddle; they had side saddles for women in those days.

Mother was good to us but when she told us to do something we knew we was supposed to do it and the same way with the father. I think mother was really the more intelligent and she was maybe a little more saving, maybe a little bit better manager. Mother's side of the family were more educated. Her father was a surveyor and a vocal music teacher. And they was no music at all on my father's side. Father's father was a farmer.

My parents started from scratch. Only my mother inherited. At one time her mother owned 400 acres around here. She used to live about a block and a half west of here. She sold it off and sold it off and sold it off after the husband died. Finally it got down to where my mother inherited thirteen acres right here and then we

bought twenty acres off of another brother of hers to make thirty-three and a half acres but then the highway took about an acre so I have about thirty-two acres. It does seem a little odd yet today when I look up this way and I can remember how it used to look about fifteen years ago before the I-29 came through. There was a road west of her (71) that went to Kansas City and it still goes but it is hilly and windy and a little of this and a little of that. My folks didn;t travel very much. Father's folks all lived where we could visit a lot of them.

We never had a Christmas tree when I was growing up. After I was married in 1912 we went up into town to buy them off a lot. We had seven children. I think there was nine in my husband's family. High as everything is now I don't know how anyone could support such a large family today. Mother cooked on a wood stove but I had a coal-oil stove. Everybody had timber on their land to cut for wood for the stoves. I still got timber out there. Got no desire to live in the city whatsoever.

I got married before I could graduate from high-school. I was seventeen when I married. My mother died of leukemia at about 88 and father was 78 when he died of a heart attack. My husband was 88 when he passed away. I'm 83. He was almost ten years older than I was. Dad worked until he died, never retired from farming. Can't remember any of my uncles or aunts dying with cancer. If they did, we didn't know what it was, and anyway most of them lived to have a pretty good age.

My brother was a farmer. I don't think I've got any grand-children who are farmers, don't believe. All my children live in the city. Two girls in real estate, and the oldest boy retired from the gas company, and the second boy is still a salesman for Auto-Lite, and one boy has a trucking line of his own, and another boy drives for P.I.E. One of my sisters is a nurse, lives in Vancouver Washington (Lillian).

The other sister is Alberta and she lives in Albequerque, New Mexico. I guess I'm the only one that is living on a farm. We have lived in the city for a few years but I didn't care for it.

About the time I was married my parents had an automobile. They got a Whippet. We had a Buick, a pretty nice car.

I learned most about cooking after I got married. Mother taught me some but I was pretty young when I was married and in school and it didn't give her much chance to teach me.

I don't think girls used to grow up as soon as they do now. Girls were more backward then. I guess I really should have gotten more education but then I wouldn't want things to be any different from what they are because I had a good husband and I got seven nice children. What else do you want?

I only knew my husband less than a year when I married him. We were just at parties and this, that and the other. He wanted to go with me and he was ten years older than I was and he was trying to pick out who he wanted and what he wanted and that's what he thought he done.

We started out renting a farm and then we finally bought after we were married about five or six years. My folks helped us quite a bit. His mother died and his father lived a few years but we never did go to him for anything. My parents lived close to us and they gave us eggs and milk and chickens and things like that a lot. We was at their place two or three times a week to visit.

It cost around thirty-five dollars to have a doctor deliver a child. Mine were all born at home. I never heard of a mid-wife in the area. They were in my mother's time but not in mine. My mother always came and stayed with me until I was able to get up and get around.

We did all right up until about four of the kids were up pretty good size, three of them were grown, and then the Depression hit and it was a pretty bad time then. We lost a couple of farms and moved to St. Joe. He had to go to work and I had to go to work but we did. As the kids got a little older they went to work and we made it all right. Wasn't too easy sometimes but we always had something to eat and a good warm house to stay in.

We lived on a farm ten miles east of St. Joe for eleven years until the Depression hit. It hit nearly everybody. Nine tenths of the farmers lost what they had. We had 73 acres. When your interest and taxes come due and you couldn't pay them, what else are you going to do but move off?

When we moved to St. Joe we went to work for what they called the W.P.A. and men and women both could go to work. My husband had a truck so he worked with contractors hauling dirt. I worked in sewing for about two years and then I went to Armour Packing Company and worked there for ten years. Then we went to Vancouver Washington, worked in the Kaiser Shipyards. I was an electrician, easy jobs, anybody could do it nearly. Took cords and put ends on them and strung up lights on ships. It was a little dangerous work because sometimes we had to get into a 440 volt box. But we was showed how to do that and we did it. That was during World War Two.

I was making 32 dollars a week at Armour's and that was hard work. And got there they started you right off at 70 dollars a week. Half the time you stood around and didn't do nothing. I've seen people at those shipyards that went in there of a morning and never turned a tap all day and drawed their money. It was something to give the people work. We paid about fifteen or twenty dollars a month for a place to live. No they charged forty dollars for a three bedroom house but everything furnished; lights, water and heat and everything. Furnished too.

At Armour I worked at different places. I worked in what they called the smoke room where you tie hams. Then I worked in the cooler where you cut meat. And we had a casing room where we shook the salt off of the casings and rewrapped them to be boxed and sent away, the casings that they put sausage and weinies and all that stuff. When I left there I had quite a little bit of seniority built up in ten years time.

I left there and went to the shipyards and we were there three years and then come back here and bought this place which didn't cost us very much because we bought from my mother.

Our boy was working in Portland and he wrote for us to come out and so my husband went out and stayed three months and then he come back and got me and the youngest boy. And then the two girls come out on the train later. We stayed there till the war (WW2) ended. Then we come back home. We had a six room apartment in St Joe and we had just paid our rent and locked the place up and went up to Portland because we didn't know whether we'd be there three months, three years or what. It wasn't much rent, very cheap and so when we come back we had that. But we wasn't in town long until we bought this and we come out here.

My husband was a pipe fitter there at the shipyards. Some days he had work to do but some days they didn't have much. You could work a little bit if you wanted to and if you didn't want to you didn't have to. It was just making jobs for people. A lot of them didn't have anything and they was on relief anyway. Everybody made the same money, 70 dollars a week.

My mother named Curtis, the oldest and I named the next one, Albert. He was named after my husband's brother, and my dad's name was Al too so he was named Albert George after his dad, his grand dad, his uncle and another grand father. And the next one was Doris, I just picked her name out because I liked it and from there on

down I just picked them out as I liked them I guess. Didn't name none of them after anybody after that. There is Curtis, Albert, Doris, Elmer, Irma, Eula and Eldon.

We started back farming here and did it with horses. I didn't like town, I liked to live on the farm, I was born and raised on the farm and it was about all I ever knew. I liked to be outdoors, liked to work outside. liked to have a garden.

When we were first married we bought all our furniture out of a Montgomery Ward catalog. From then on I don't think I ever ordered another item out of the catalog that I remember of. We did use the Wards and Sears catalogs in the outhouse. There wasn't any real toilet paper not for a long long time. I don't know what they did back before the catalogs because that was my first experience as far back as I can remember.

When we moved here, this house had lights on it but that was all. We had a coal furnace, then we went to butane and then natural gas. We had well water. One summer it seemed like it was kind of failing and we had a new well dug and it was an awful fine well and we used that a number of years. And then they got to talking about the wells was going dry through the country so I had them put city water in about three years ago. But to this day our well has never been pumped dry and I wouldn't have had to done that. But I use the city water on the inside of the house and then if we water the garden or wash the walk or wash cars or anything like that on the outside we use the well water. The well water is wonderful, nice and cold. A lot of people like to drink it better than the city water.

We had a cave, a cellar and it was a good deep one and it would keep things real cool. And in the wintertime you could put your vegetables, your apples, your potatoes and all of that stuff down there and it would keep them all winter. I wish we had one right here now. My husband

always said he was going to have a cellar made but he never did. In town we used one of those great big nice ice boxes, big just like one of those refrigerators. Had the ice man come about every third day. But this house here had electricity and so it had a refrigerator when we got here. I have one now that makes ice cubes.

Just like the washing machines; we used to wash on a washboard, and then we got a machine that you had to push by hand. And then pretty soon they come out with the electric washer that you could plug in but you'd have to wring your clothes with an electric wringer. Then they got one that all you did was open the lid and close it. Same way with the drier, all those conveniences. These young girls of today that's married, if they had to go back to something like that, they'd think they was ruined for life. They couldn't do it. If I had to use a wash board tomorrow I could do it if I had to. I wouldn't like it but I could do it. Wash boards was hard on the clothes. I had a wood stove and used to iron with three or four of those flat irons and while you was ironing with one, why the rest of them was getting hot on the stove.

Never had a door locked until long after we came out here. We never thought about locking a door of night, door nor window, everything open. I have a key to lock this front door. I lost the real key but I can lock it by struggling with it long enough. I have a storm door there now and it is always locked. In the wintertime it stays shut. No one hardly ever comes to our front door. Nearly everybody comes around to the back.

Our first car was a Buick that we got about 1917. By the time we went to Washington the roads were fine paved roads. We went on the old Oregon Trail, a beautiful drive, winding along the Columbia River. My husband and I made a number of trips back out to Washington because my sister and her family live out there. Sometimes we'd go every year. We went to the World's Fair in Seattle. Went to Colorado once or twice, down to Houston to see Ronnie once, and I was on down to San

Antonio once. And I've travelled to California several times. Been to Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Nevada. Made them in cars part of the time and train part of the time. I've flown some, to Florida. Never rode a propeller plane, only jets. When the planes were first out I didn't think I'd like to ride in them. But now I guess they are about as safe as any way. By the time my parents died they was just a getting cars that weren't running too good.

Of material things most of the time our children had pretty common. If each child had one good suit of clothes, that's all they needed because they only wore them on Sunday or special occasions and outside of that it was jeans for every day and school. My folks bought the piano when I was a girl at home. My folks were of moderate means, they weren't rich but they had what they wanted and lived pretty good.

My husband and I both went into the Methodist Church when we had been married about a year. We were baptized there and when our first child was born we had him baptized in the same church. It was the Clarksdale Methodist Church. Now I got one boy that still don't go to church. One goes part of the time and then the oldest two are both Deacons in the church.

Yes I feel like there was the "Good Old Days". Seemed like there wasn't as much trouble then as there is today. And you hardly ever heard of people that you knew dying with cancer of this or that or the other. You'd never hear of a killing or someone being a burglar or something like that. I think that's what we mean by the "Good Old Days". I don't think the lack of modern washing machines bothered anyone. Every body was doing the same thing. Maybe your clothes wasn't as white or as clean but we lived and got by anyway. We made our own soap and it was pretty good to take the dirt out.

Soap was made out of meat grease and lye. It didn't smell good at all. We used old lard that had got too strong. You had to put so many

pounds of meat grease to so many cans of lye and a little bit of water. Let it boil and boil and the lye ate all the grease up and it formed into soap. Leave it set over night and the next morning you could go out there and take a big bladed butcher knife and begin to make squares out of the big black kettle we used to cook it in. We'd cut the bars about 5 inches square. When you was washing you could take a bar of that and shave off some and throw it in your hot water and go on and wash. We washed the clothes and the dishes with that lye soap. But we bought the soap we used on our faces. The lye soap was too strong for your skin but it cut the dirt out of clothes pretty good. Some people used the lye soap for bathing but we never did.

There were some people who didn't take a bath except on Saturday. You may not wash all over. After I was married we had this huge wood burning ranges. They had a bigwarming oven. You could get a bowl of food ready and set it in there to keep it warm for 2 or 3 hours if you'd want to. And then on one end of the range there was a big reservoir. It would hold probably ten or twelve gallons. You always had hot water. It had two lids, a large lid and a half lid. Why you could dip a gallon bucket down in the big hole.

When you are young and you got children coming on you just take everything for granted. But as you get older you appreciate them more.

There is a lot of good programs on television and there is a lot of it that I don't care much about. I think some of these programs go entirely too far with their sex affaires for these smaller children to see. I think there are programs they shouldn't show. I know there a lot of people much younger than I am who feel the same way. What's right is right and what's wrong is wrong.

I think children should take care to obey their parents. Sometimes parents can go a little too far too. People like for children to come into their homes that will know how to act and to

behave. Although I realize that kids are kids and they grow and go through a lot of stages and they do a lot of things but they are no different than the rest. They've all been kids. We could go places with our seven kids and we would go in and sit down and you wouldn't hardly see a move out of one of them. But the children today are more restless or something.

Right now they're talking about a depression which I hope never comes because I lived through one and I'd hate to see these young people try to go through one because I don't know how they could. They've never been used to any hardship. They wouldn't know where to begin.

Before the depression (1930's) we had bought land that we paid $305 an acre for and that was way too much to pay for land at that time. Selling corn at 35 cents a bushel, you never would have paid for it. My husband liked the ground because it was river bottom land on the 102 River a little ways east of the Platte River. It was wonderful ground and if the Depression hadn't come along we would've made it fine. Of course he didn't know there was going to be any depression at all. But it did and there was no way we was ever going to be able to make it. The prices had come down to nothing so we just sold out and went to town and I'm not sorry we did because everything turned out all right the way it was.

Now this land that joins mine right here belonged to my husband's nephew and he just sold it last year for ten thousand dollars an acre. And we only paid 4500 dollars for this land. So we haven't done too bad, unless another depression comes along. But I can't believe that it will ever do that again. Surely they won't let the world get into such a shape again.